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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DO 649

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nifty Theater

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 201 Locust

____ not for publication

city or town Waterville

____ vicinity

state Washington

code WA

county Douglas

code 017

zip code 98858

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____ nationally ____ statewide ____ locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

6/23/99
Date

Allyson Brooks, PhD. State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register.

____ See continuation sheet

____ determined eligible for the National Register. ____ See continuation sheet

____ determined not eligible for the National Register.

____ removed from the National Register.

____ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

The Nifty Theatre
Name of Property

Douglas/Washington
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
One	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
One	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Movie Theaters in Washington
State from 1900 to 1948

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revival:
Mission/Spanish Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Wood: Weatherboard

roof Metal: Sheets

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

The Nifty Theatre
Name of Property

Douglas/Washington
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1919 - 1948

Significant Dates

1919

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

North Central Washington Museum,
Wenatchee, Washington

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The Nifty Theatre

Douglas/Washington

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Narrative Description

The Nifty Theatre is a classic example of an early 20th century small-town theater built in a period revival style. The building was constructed beginning in 1918 and completed in 1919. The site is located in the heart of rural Waterville, Washington. Waterville is located 2,837 feet above sea level making it the highest incorporated town in the State of Washington. Waterville is located on Highway 2 between Wenatchee and Spokane with a population of approximately 1,500. This very small rural farming community has very few businesses and many of the residents there commute to work in the larger cities of Wenatchee and East Wenatchee. The community is surrounded by fertile, gently rolling farmland that has long been a center for wheat and other grain cultivation along with some cattle and fruit production. Fairly remote, Waterville is 26 miles from Wenatchee to the southwest and 36 east from Coulee City.

Downtown Waterville includes a concentration of historic structures built between 1891 and 1915 that served as the business hub of the Douglas County seat through the 19th and 20th centuries. This section of the town was designated a National Register District [NR 05/19/88] for both its unique heritage and architecture. The historic Waterville Hotel has been designated to the National Register [NR 10/18/84] as well as the Douglas County Courthouse [NR 09/05/75]. The history of the town is documented within these documents. The Nifty Theatre is located immediately next to the downtown National Register district and while not constructed of the same materials as most of the downtown area (predominately brick), it is of a style and character that is compatible with the district.

The building starts below grade with two entrances, one on the east and one on the west side of the structure. This area served as living quarters for the original owners. The composition of the foundation and walls of this area are cement block and brick. The partial basement includes a 2-bedroom apartment, living room, dining room, kitchen, utility area and bathroom. There are six multi-paned windows in this apartment on both the east and west sides. The interior of the apartment features built-in cabinets, fir flooring, a number of storage closets, five-panel doors throughout the apartment and picture railing molding in the bedrooms, living and dining rooms. Few alterations have been made to this space over the years. The remainder of the area below ground level was originally crawl space, but has been excavated to a depth of six feet to allow for structural reinforcement of the foundation and bracing of the floors at one end of the building. This area includes the electrical panels, a workshop area, storage space and a partial bathroom. During the original construction of the Nifty, a stove overheated and caught fire to the sub-floor, scorching the joists and floor. They were reblocked and braced at that time. Evidence of this fire is visible today.

The primary façade is where the only expressions of the Mission style occur. This includes a stucco finish, curvilinear parapet, corner pilasters, deeply recessed small windows as the second and attic story level, wood window surrounds, and other simple wood trim. These features are key to the style of the building. Above grade construction is wood-frame with tongue and groove cedar siding and a stucco finish on the main facade. The building is painted white with a faded "Nifty Theatre" painted on the north and west sides. The stucco facade includes two large, hinged, flat windows without a sash at mid-level of structure, perhaps used for poster displays. At this level on the east and west sides is another multi-paned window. At the second story level, a hinged, rectangular window with multi-panes is in the center between two elongated hinged, oval windows. A twelve-paned, hinged window is at the peak of the parapet opening from the attic level. A wood canopy suspended by chains and wood braces covers the steps to the building. On the east side of the building an attached shed roof covers the stairway to the apartment below and in years past provided a shelter for the fire hose that used to be located there.

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Narrative Description (continued)

The main portion of the building begins at sidewalk level with steps up to double entrance doors on the north end. Once through the double doors there are steps leading up to the ticket window. Past the ticket window are triple doors into the lobby. A back-lit glass marquee sign is above these doors and reads "Tonight Nifty Theatre 3 reels - Change of Program." Inside the auditorium there is a level area of approximately 15 feet before the floor begins to slope downward. Inside, the north wall (the entrance wall) features several windows. The windows for the crying room are in a bank of five (this room was utilized during the theater's "heyday" for mothers and their young children to avoid disruption to the general audience). There are projection windows staggered in the mid-section of the wall and one window from which the projectionist was able to view the film.

Upon entering the auditorium to the east is the office area, which includes stairs to the original projection room. The walls are lathe and plaster; the flooring is 4" wood planking. To the west inside the auditorium, are located the ladies powder room and restroom, and stairs leading up to the crying room. Within the confines of the auditorium is also a gentlemen's restroom. Located outside the powder room is an original drinking water dispenser. This is a porcelain bowl mounted directly on a pipe coming up from the floor. The water stays on continuously. The lobby area also features a concession stand. Two "flame" wall sconces, original to the building, accent partition walls. These are 8 inch high and of glass molded in the form of a fire flame. The glass is lightly painted inside a purple/brown/yellow color to accentuate the "flame" appearance when lit.

The theater itself is an area 65'x30' with a floor sloping down to the orchestra pit where the floor levels out. This slope drops 1 foot in 8 feet. There are double doors located at this level on the east and west sides. These are exit doors, which will be utilized as ADA accessible entrance/exit on the west side of the building. The stage is elevated approximately 3 feet and has 6-foot wings and a proscenium arch, which was re-constructed during the restoration process (the original wings had been removed at some point when motion pictures were introduced). The floors are of wood planking; the walls of the auditorium are lathe/plaster with a Celutex (sound control) covering that has been re-painted as part of the restoration. Originally, the theater held 300 wood flip-seats. There are now 158 in the theater and are spaced further apart than the original 300.

At approximately 18' feet high up on the walls a continuous molding encircles the room. This 6" wide molding is supported with simple wood brackets every 24-28". Above this shelf, on the east and west walls, are sections of wallpaper depicting different scenes of flowers, forests, Japanese pagodas, palaces, Grecian ruins, birds and water scenes, each about four feet tall. Above the stage is another wallpaper section 8 feet wide by 4 feet tall depicting a forest and floral scene. Minor repairs have been completed on the paper in the restoration process. Above the east/west scenes are Celutex walls that are painted blue to match the rest of the walls, but have a white "cloud" finish. Above the wallpaper sections, the walls begin to curve to create a cove ceiling with original pressed and painted tin at the flat top. The tin sections are highly ornamental square sections. As part of the restoration, new lighting has been added in the center of the building, including a ceiling fan with light and wall sconce lights. There are original lights on both ends of the ceiling. These are frosted white, oblong bulbs with metal caps.

The stage area with proscenium measures 17'x30'. There are two side entrances to stage to the east and west. There are two doors from the stage to the south (rear) of the building which lead to dressing rooms (this area was originally a small dressing room and later utilized as a garage for the Brown's 1909 Hupmobile). In front of the stage a short wood wall with low posts separates the orchestra pit from the first row of seating. Footlights accent the front edge of the stage.

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Narrative Description (continued)

The original suspended backdrop screen is lowered to the stage from a wood slated roller with ropes and pulleys. This backdrop is painted with oils on canvas and depicts a stair landing with concrete railings, flowers in urns, potted plants, and a background scene of trees and a lake. Dominating the background design is decorative red drapery with cords and tassels. This screen has suffered minor water damage and exposure to dirt but remains intact today.

The current appearance of the structure, with the minor changes as listed above, is virtually the same as when the doors opened in 1919. The wood floors are original and have been sanded and re-stained. The walls have been repaired and painted in the auditorium. The Nifty's architectural design is unique. Except for the Douglas County Courthouse, few buildings in the Waterville area resemble it with a Mission/Spanish Revival complexion and Roaring 20's decorum. This property meets the National Register Criteria as it was built in the boom of our nation's development. The Nifty Theatre is unique in architecture and for its history of culture, arts, entertainment and commerce to a rural northwestern town. It is important to the locality as a long-standing structure of the community and comes with a wealth of information derived from older residents of the community that remember those "days gone by." Comparing the real estate listing information to the building description today, it is found that little has changed. The basic structure is intact and many of the decorative and historic elements are in place. The current owner plans on restoring the theater and subsequently reopening the building as a performing arts theater and community hall, thus offering a further revitalization and enhancement of the community.

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The Nifty Theatre

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Narrative Statement of Significance

The Nifty Theater meets the National Register Criteria A as it has been maintained in its original use as a theater. The property also meets Criteria C due to the retention of the structure's exterior and interior integrity with only minor alterations over the years. It embodies distinctive characteristics of the type of theater built in rural communities at that time and would be considered a Combination House by the year it was built with characteristics of a Nickelodeon style of theater, serviceable to both vaudeville and movies (MPD, National Register). A Combination House often featured characteristics of old world styles for embellishment and known as vaudeville theaters, movie theaters and movie-vaudeville theaters. Other elements of a Combination House include projecting marquee above a recessed entry and exterior embellishment. The interior space was divided into a lobby, projection booth and auditorium. Nickelodeons, recognized as the first movie theaters, encompassed the storefront conversions, second floor walk-ups and built expressly for early film exhibition with functional, flat-floor, singular spaces with a fixed screen at one end and a projection booth above the entryway at the opposite. Sometimes there was a shallow stage under the screen. Although the Nifty was built a few years later (1918) than most Nickelodeons (1905-1910) and Combination House theaters (1905-1915), it was built in an earlier style probably due to the economics of rural Waterville instead of the Palace-era style theaters of 1915-1936. The owner, though, may have been influenced by the palatial elements in early theaters by the appearance of the elaborate wall coverings that were installed high on the interior walls. The Wenatchee Theater, a similar style structure was built in Wenatchee in 1905 and was first designed with a flat floor for vaudeville acts and public dancing. This 300-seat theater was completely equipped with stage and scenery and could accommodate even prize fighting events. The theater was remodeled in 1908 with a sloping floor for film entertainment. The 300 seat-Nifty Theater, designed very much like the Wenatchee Theater, utilizes the stage area but accommodates patrons with a sloped floor for easier viewing of both live acts and later, motion pictures.

It is distinguishable from the neighboring buildings in the town of Waterville, Washington, (National Register Historic District 05/19/88, Waterville Hotel NR 10/18/84 and the Smith Hospital and Douglas County Press Building NR 05/11/89). These were constructed predominantly of local brick and concrete and date from 1891 to 1915. The city's commercial district, located at the intersection of Locust and Chelan Streets has the character of a city center and by 1911 the area was referred to informally as a public square, reflecting the district's role as a focal point for commercial activity. The 1903 wheat boom had a major impact on the city's built environment and "nowhere were the fortunes of the city more clearly reflected than in the growth of the downtown commercial center." The styles of the 17 contributing structures in the commercial district are predominately two-story structures with storefront bays. The integrity of the district remains well preserved although integrity of individual buildings varies. In the National Register Historic District for Waterville, Washington it is noted that "several properties of historical interest in the commercial development of the city exist outside the boundaries. The Waterville Hotel (National Register, 1984) is located one-half block to the west, the Nifty Theatre is located one-half block to the east...." "Collectively, the buildings of the Downtown Waterville Historic District form the finest example of turn of the century commercial architecture in (Douglas) county and are an outstanding reflection of a small city on the agricultural frontier."

The Nifty was constructed entirely of wood with the Mission style parapet at the roofline and a large box-shape design. The Multiple Property Documentation also notes that Combination houses used old-world styles of embellishment and the Nifty certainly follows this with a simplified Mission styling and minimal decoration. There were several structures in the Mission style built in the nearest city of Wenatchee, Washington, 27 miles away. The Nifty Theatre qualifies for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places due to its retention of its original integrity. The structure exists in the original location, there have been no additions placed on the original lot. The site is located one block away from the Downtown Waterville Historic District, on the same street. The building retains the original exterior cladding and trim, marquee, and façade. There have been few

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

alterations. Interior integrity also adds to the strength of this nomination in that the original floor plan remains intact, the flooring, wall materials and seating are original and limited alterations to the lighting have not distracted from the original appearance of the interior space. The lobby, auditorium and projection booth remains in near original condition except for the removal of the original film equipment in the projection room. Plans are underway to replace the film equipment with vintage equipment. The limited alterations to the auditorium have been the replacement of curtains to wood walls to separate the concession counter and the bathrooms from the main seating area. This feature does not distract from the interior space use today.

The rural community of Waterville drew its citizens and rural neighbors to a bustling downtown in the early part of the 20th century and featured several stores, active businesses and several banks. It was a natural occurrence for a theater to be built as one of the only entertainment features in the community, besides saloons. It was built as a large structure near the major downtown activities of Waterville. While feature films were the main core of the entertainment provided there, it actually served the needs of the community in many other ways such as providing space for high school plays, meeting space and live acts (vaudeville). The National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Movie Theaters in Washington State from 1900 to 1948," discusses how early theatrical productions of traveling troupes, vaudeville and musicals set the stage for the public to respond favorably to the technology of moving pictures. This documentation further elaborates on the significant social aspect of community life not only across the nation, but also in the rural isolated populations of early Washington State. "When technology birthed the mechanism for projecting images in motion, a ready market existed to sample its wares."

Often theaters were located near or in the downtown area of a community and most often was a visually prominent structure that served for different cultural events, a gathering place for nightlife and social centers for the entire community. W. P. Brown built the Nifty Theatre in 1918 and opened for business in 1919. It is remarkable he was able to build such a structure due to the United States having just entered into World War I and the resulting hardship this war caused in our nation. It became even more important to have a theater for this rural area to bring in entertainment as well as news events during a national crisis. "Geography and climate complicated communication among Washington communities which film entertainment helped remedy with its valued newsreel service." A budding film industry also mixed well with the frontier nature of most Washingtonians."

Mr. Brown lived in the basement apartment with his wife and operated the theater from 1919-1959. An attempt to sell the theater in 1946 (for \$20,000) was unsuccessful. The current property owner discovered a copy of the original "Theatre Exchange Company Listing #105" describing the Nifty property. This real estate sale listing is important documentation that has served as a valuable resource for the building's history. In this document, written by Mr. Brown, it is stated, "Family theater in County seat with no competition. Excellent living quarters on premises. Present owner has had the show business in this town for 30 years. The income from this situation has permitted the owner to enjoy his hobby of racehorses and to acquire some 1200 acres of land in addition to his theater property. The owner is a college man (Washington State) and chose show business because his knee failed to stop a lugar bullet and left him slightly incapacitated for strenuous work or long hours. That his choice is a wise one is attested by his 30 years in the town and his worldly acquisitions." The document then describes the building as such: BUILDING: On a corner, 1 block from main business intersection. Plain V roof frame structure. Substantially built with alternate 2" x 8" and 3" x 8" side studding. Dimensions 31.4' x 108' plus 9.6' shed type extension in back. Approximately 30' maximum height. Built in 1919. Painted white. Paint on north and west sides fair, on south and east sides needs repainting. Shed type extension on back used as a garage and part was used as dressing room for stage players. There are two dressing room spaces, one down a flight of stairs and the other on the garage level. The composition roof is in good condition except the northwest corner. A

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

piece approximately 4' x 4' was blown off in storm and has not been replaced. Stands alone on a 75' x 119' lot, 4' in from the street on the east side and joins the street line in front. The approximately 40' x 119' vacant property on the east side is used as a yard. It has some shrubs and trees and a clothesline. The back is used to store wood for one of the furnaces. There are four ventilators on the peak of the roof. The front is stuccoed and appears to be in good condition. The name of the theater is painted on the side towards the business district and also on the front. A small canopy overhangs the street but serves no advertising purpose. There are 4 steps up from the street to the enclosed ramp which is the outer lobby. The entrance is approximately 9'. The balance of the lower part of the front of the building is taken up with display space in 4 glass enclosed frames." Today, the building appears on the exterior as it was described in 1948. The remainder of this document is equally entertaining with detailed descriptions of the interior spaces on both floors, auditorium, the lobby, restrooms and office areas (and all the furnishings) as well as the projection equipment all being listed. Of note are Mr. Brown's notations about the COMPETITION ("Only theatre in the County. Nearest theatres are 27 miles one way and 42 miles in the other direction"), the POPULATION ("Approximately 1100 in town. Nearly 10,000 in County. Mostly old settlers and their descendants. Many of German descent."), the INDUSTRIES ("Typical rural community in which wheat farming, beef cattle and turkey raising account for most of the income. On main highway. Transients are accommodated by a good brick hotel and 2 tourist courts. Railroad is five miles distant. (Served by truck lines."). CLIMATE & MISCELLANEOUS: Typical eastern Washington seasonable weather. Hot summer is tempered somewhat by the elevation which is approximately 2650 feet above sea level. There are dam projects, either completed or proposed, in all directions. This will eventually effect the climate somewhat, due to the increase in the general amount of moisture retained. Excellent fishing and hunting territory. Large Union High School. Good Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Four Square and Federated (Methodist, Christian, Baptist and Presbyterian Churches). 3 automobile agencies. County seat. Weekly newspaper. Bank. Substantial business district. Community is prosperous. Active Commercial Club.)."

The Nifty Theatre meets the National Register criteria for the Entertainment/Recreation category not only by its years of entertainment operation but also by the fact that for years it provided a wide range of cultural and entertainment experiences for the small rural community of Waterville. Community and high school plays held performances there, traveling vaudeville acts traveled by train from Wenatchee to Waterville, then by wagon or later, automobiles to perform on its stage and later when movies were shown there, the latest feature films were shown to an appreciative, isolated community. The Nifty Theatre was able to provide information about the armed services in movie news for the patriots left at home through two world wars. Often this information was more timely than the weekly newspaper or other communications. Besides entertainment, the theater provided a gathering spot for the social life of the local citizenry; a place where people of all ages could go and not be directly associated with the saloons or other adult nightlife. During the dark times of the Depression years, Mr. Brown sponsored drawings for bags of groceries and cash rewards, providing some levity. The theater was also a commerce-generating proposition as local people were hired to operate the theater thus enhancing the economy of Waterville.

It should also be noted that Mr. Brown was a colorful character of Waterville during this time. He kept meticulous records of his horse racing interests and dairies of his business holdings, his receipts and stars that performed at the theater. His ledger of performances at the Nifty records the dates, income, taxes, name of attraction, film distributor, and fees he paid for billboard advertising, music and wages to staff. From the lesser-known films to the more notable, Mr. Brown's records list such movies as "Flashing Fangs" (1927) and listing his costs of \$48 in two evenings showings, "Flaming Flapper" and "Below the Line" (costing \$65 for two showings). One notation remarks that "Hooked at Alter" and "American Venus" failed to arrive on time from Paramount. He had to call Paramount, then drive to Wenatchee to pick up the films that were sent to him by train. In August of 1926, a

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

three-day performance was held for Deen Paul, otherwise known as "The Human Radio," an apparent psychic, but not an "ordinary so-called "mind reader or Crystal Gazer" (Brown's notes indicate that receipts for the performance were split "50-50" with Paul). Throughout the ledger are hand bills advertising the upcoming films ("Hearts and Fists," a western with logging scenes from Tacoma, Washington; "Funnymooners," a comedy with Ralph Graves and special added attractions of traveling musicians offering singing, dancing and ensemble entertainment from high opera to Hawaiian radio stars ("MINGLE and FROLIC in the Sunkissed atmosphere of Faraway Hawaii"- all from 1926). Thursday, February 4, 1926 was an exciting night when the Nifty presented San Francisco Vaudeville Shows with Jessie Frawley. Mr. Brown notes on the handbill indicate that he felt Jessie Frawley was a "good dancer only" and her co-stars were "very ordinary or poor" entertainers. His notes on the ledger sheet further comments on this entertainment with "Jessie Frawley + Dad + 2 hicks on guitar." In July of 1924, the De Bells's Minstrels played to 745 people and were noted as "an extra good company." Notations about the film industry also reflect his keeping abreast of important events in Hollywood such as film actress "Barbara La Marr (originally from Yakima) died at her home in Altadena, Calif." (January 30, 1926). On Tuesday, September 8, 1925, "Lora Carol and Company," (Lora Carol, "the Galli Curci of Broadway" with her partner, Mr. Ring, a tenor, violinist and comedian") from New York's Broadway offered "singing, violin specialties, comedy and a special feature "presenting Mr. Ring's latest song for the first time 'The World Can Never Understand' written at Banff last week." Even the "Arizona Wranglers" of KNX Hollywood played the Nifty on December 2, 1925. They were advertised as the "most imitated cowboy entertainers of all time!"

The Associated Students of Waterville High School musical and comedy performances were also held yearly at the Nifty. Several of the movies shown were made from well-known books of the period such as "Thelma," "Beverly of Gaustauk" and "Girl of the Golden West" (1924). Earnings for an evening film or live entertainment might average \$40 for an evening when tickets cost 35 cents for adults and 25 cents for children. Even into the 50's the variety of entertainment was exceptional. A flyer from November 8, 1951 announced the "Big Stage Show" featuring an "international hit parade" of stars. "Harold Hardin, Ace Juggler, Comedian and Impressionist (who also acted as Master of Ceremonies) was on-stage with Red Watson, Canada's Wizard of the Banjo, Dale Hall, a Lovely Black Light Novelty Dancer and The Royal Whirlwinds, a Sensational Roller Skating Team." Mr. Brown's comment on the entertainment was "a good show and a full house of adults - standing room only!" These are examples of the diverse types of entertainment offered to the public by Mr. Brown at the Nifty Theatre. The ledger also shows evidence that the theater business in 1923 was fairly profitable with a year-end reporting of \$2,458.24 in receipts, although towards the end of Mr. Brown's life, it appears that his estate had dwindled significantly.

In 1959 with the introduction of television, the theater became unprofitable to Mr. Brown and he closed the Nifty's doors. At this time the projection equipment, chairs, and screen were sold to other theaters in larger cities. The North Central Washington Museum in Wenatchee utilized a large section of seating for many years and was recently returned for reinstallation in the renovated theater. After Mr. Brown's death in 1960, Mrs. Brown sold the building to Claude Case of Waterville for \$1.00. She lived in the basement apartment until her death in 1970. Mr. Case utilized the building for storage of equipment and supplies for his Construction Company and collections, owning the property from 1970-1997. He made no alterations to the site. In 1997 Jim Dixon, also of Waterville, purchased the structure and began restoration. The building remained intact in its original condition during this time period. It is a unique situation that the Nifty was "frozen in time" while other theaters across the nation were being lost. In the evolution of entertainment offerings and venues, theaters were often remodeled into multi-plexes and their unique characteristics lost in modernization.

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The Nifty Theatre

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Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Identifying American Architecture, John J. G. Blumenson, 1977, pgs. 2-5.

What Style is it? A Guide to American Architecture, John C. Polleliers, S, Allen Chambers, Jr., Nancy B. Schwartz, Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983.

Douglas County Museum, microfiche records of Wenatchee World and Douglas County Press articles and advertisements, 1918 - 1925.

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Listing: "Movie Theaters in Washington State from 1900 to 1948, Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, August 20, 1991.

Nifty Theatre daily log ledger of W. P. Brown, 1920-1927.

W. P. Brown, personal year dairies, 1927-45 (not complete).

Personal papers of W. P. Brown relating to property (original mortgage, deeds of trust and loan papers).

Personal interviews with Waterville residents (familiar with the history of the theater): Virginia Nelson, Phil and Dorothy Wainscott, Bob Borders, Edna Slusser-George, Bobbie Ann Willms, Carl Thomsen, Mrs. Ed Grande, Dale Loeb sack, Jeannie Brown, Barbara Firoved, Sam Garrett, Kathy Kendrick, Elsie Tittle, Mable Knowles, Joann Whitehall.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Nifty Theatre

Douglas/Washington

Section Number 10, Page 1
Geographical data

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1, 2 and 3, Block 12, Kincade's First Addition to the town of Waterville. The property is bounded to the north by Locust Street, to the west by Rainier Street, and to the south by an alley.

Boundary Justification

This legal parcel has been associated with the property throughout the historic period.

The Nifty Theatre
Name of Property

Douglas/Washington
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	110	720053	512812118
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kris Young
Jenna Dixon/ North Central Washington Museum (509) 664-3343
organization 127 S. Mission
Wenatchee, WA 98801 date December 17, 1998
street & number 391 L N.W., P.O. Box 696 telephone (509) 745-8127
city or town Waterville state WA zip code 98858

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name James Dixon
street & number 391 L N.W., P.O. Box 696 telephone (509) 745-8127
city or town Waterville state WA zip code 98858

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Mary E. Dodge
Douglas County Treasurer
P.O. Box 609, Waterville, WA 98858
(509) 745-8525 or (509) 884-9428

1999

DOUGLAS COUNTY
REAL PROPERTY
TAX STATEMENT

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

LOTS 1 THUR 3; BLK. 12; KINCAID'S 1ST
ADD

YOUR TAX DOLLAR WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AS SHOWN BELOW:

FIRE PROTECTION	CITY / ROAD	SCHOOL	FIRE DISTRICT
ACRES	41.08 PORT DISTRICT	86.77 CEMT. HOSP.	0.00 PARKS REC
AMOUNT	4.07 STATE LEVY	17.50 COUNTY	0.00 OTHER
	53.98	30.72	8.32
TOTAL 1999 VOTED TAXES 94.28			

DIXON, JAMES

PO BOX 696
WATERVILLE WA 98858-0000

FEE OWNER

BRING ALL PARTS WHEN PAYING IN PERSON

Mary E. Dodge
Douglas County Treasurer
P.O. Box 609, Waterville, WA 98858
(509) 745-8525 or (509) 884-9428

1999

DOUGLAS COUNTY
REAL PROPERTY
TAX STATEMENT

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

LOTS 1 THUR 3; BLK. 12; KINCAID'S 1ST
ADD

DELINQUENT PAYMENTS RECEIVED WITHOUT
INTEREST AND PENALTY WILL BE RETURNED
RETURN THIS WITH REMITTANCE

DIXON, JAMES

PO BOX 696
WATERVILLE WA 98858-0000

FEE OWNER

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO DOUGLAS COUNTY TREASURER • YOUR CANCELLED CHECK IS YOUR RECEIPT

PARCEL
NUMBER

11901200100

VALUATIONS

LAND	9,400
IMPROVEMENTS	7,300
TOTAL	16,700
LEVY 15	14.5175
GROSS TAX	242.44
FIRE PROTECTION	
LESS SENIOR CITIZEN EXEMPTION	

NET

1999

TAX

242.44

DELINQUENT

KEEP THIS
PORTION

FIRST HALF TAXES ARE DUE APRIL 30TH
SECOND HALF TAXES ARE DUE OCTOBER
31ST. SIGNIFICANT INTEREST AND PENALTIES
WILL BE INCURRED IF DELINQUENT.

PLEASE CALL FOR CORRECT INTEREST
WHEN PAYING DELINQUENT TAXES.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON REVERSE SIDE

PARCEL
NUMBER

11901200100



2ND PAYMENT DUE
OCTOBER 31ST

AMOUNT DUE 2ND HALF

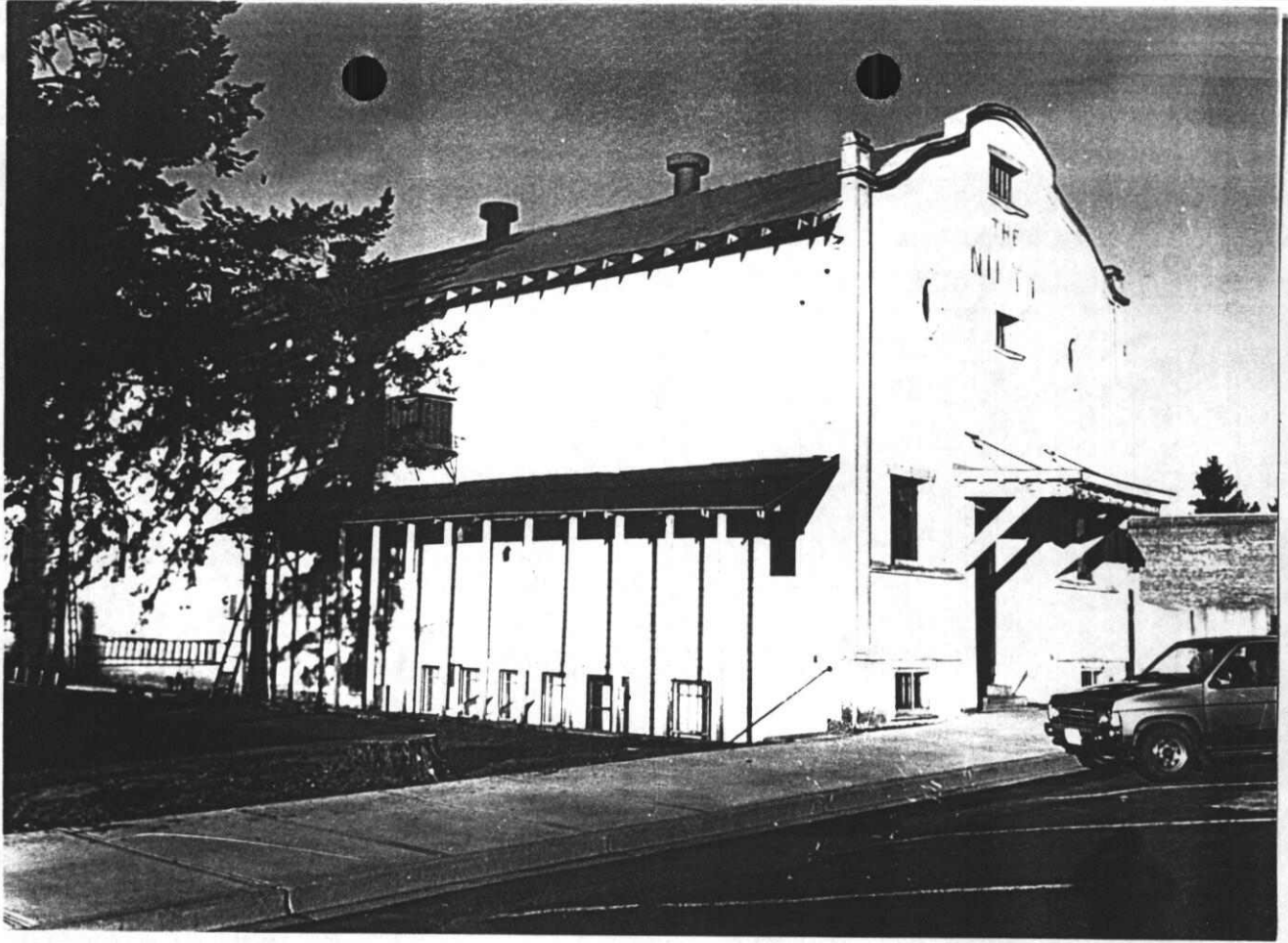
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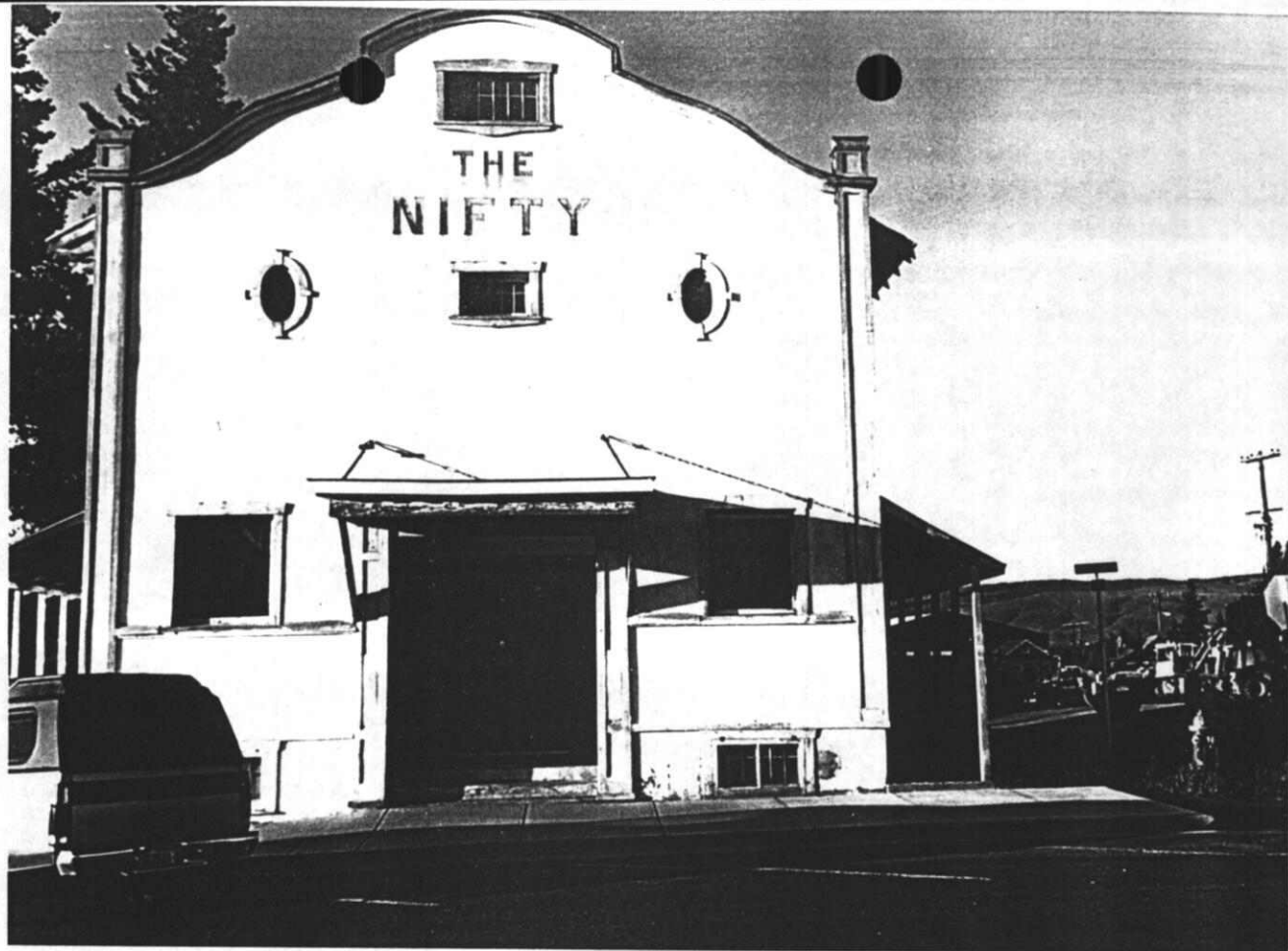
DELINQUENT

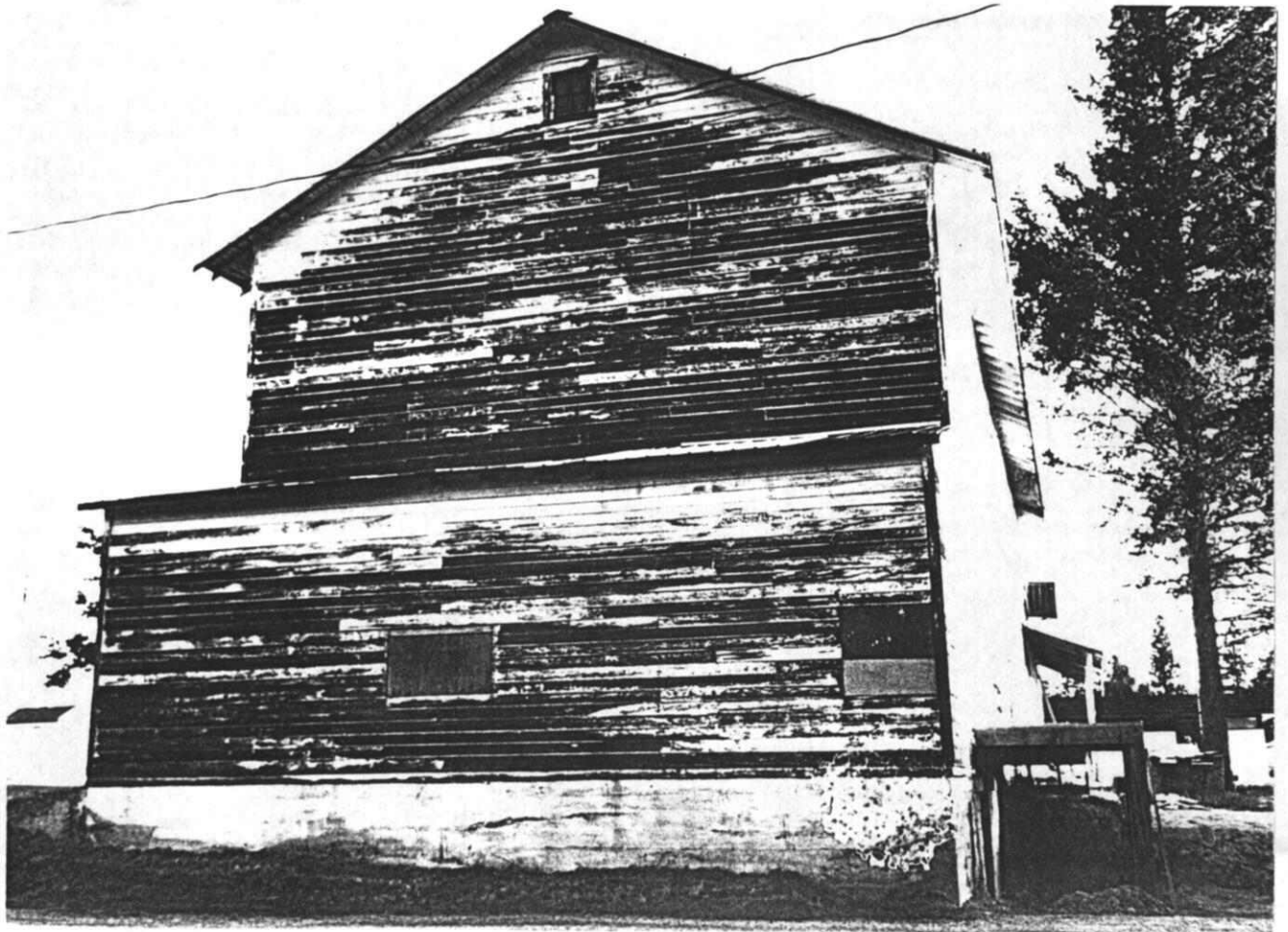
INTEREST
PENALTY
TOTAL PAID

SECOND HALF TAXES ARE DUE OCTOBER
31ST OR SIGNIFICANT INTEREST AND PENAL-
TIES WILL BE INCURRED.

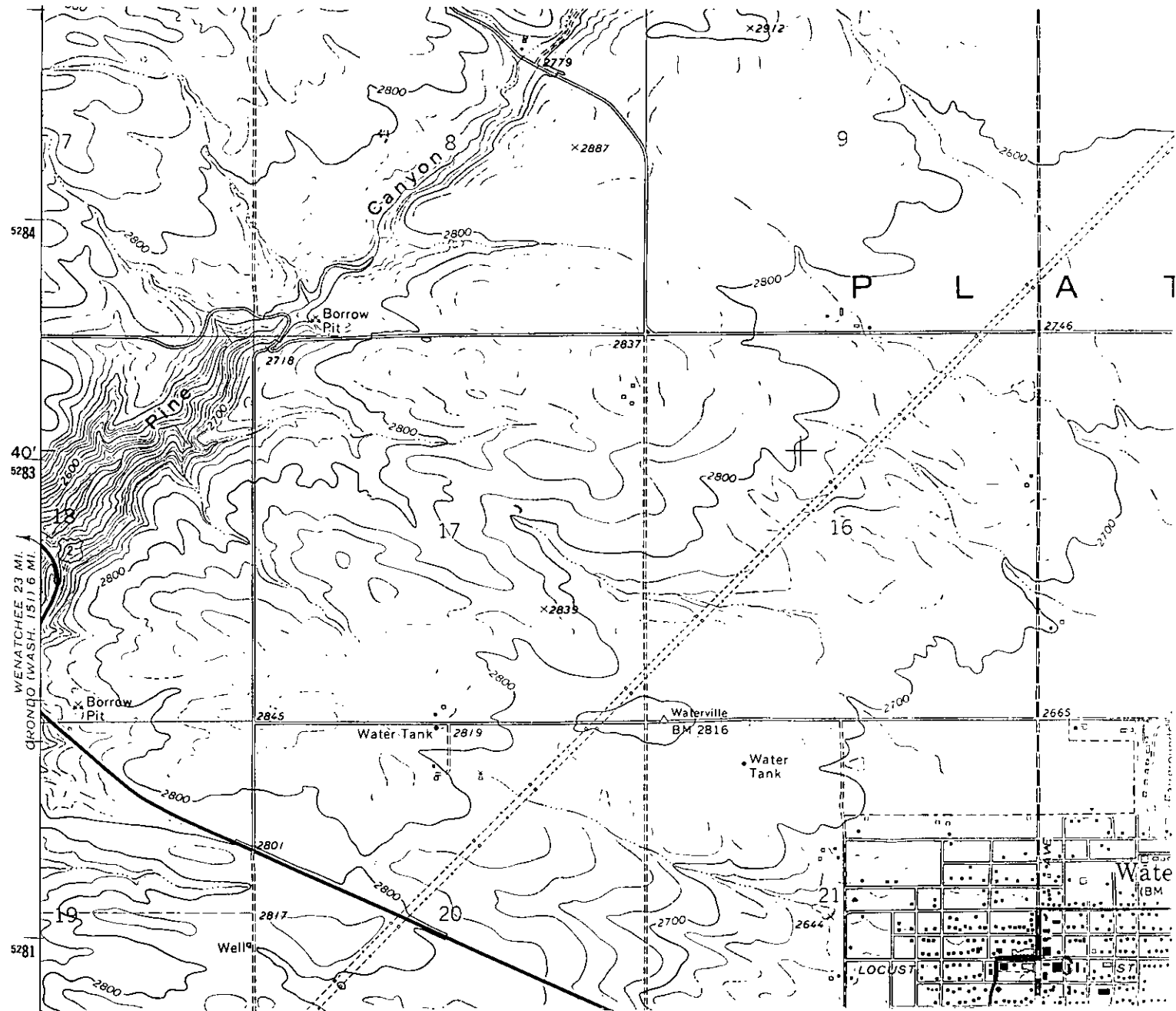
PLEASE CALL FOR CORRECT INTEREST
WHEN PAYING DELINQUENT TAXES.







Nitty Theater
 DOUGLAS CO., WA
 UTM:
 10/20053/5281218



WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

page one

A) Identification

Property Name The Nifty Theatre
Address 201 Locust
City Waterville Zip WA County 98858

B) Site Access (describe site access, restrictions, etc.)

The best means of access to the property is East Locust
Street - Corner of Locust & Baker - Waterville, WA.

C) Property Owner

James Dixon
PO Box 696
Waterville, WA 98858

D) Legal boundary description/justification

Lots 1,2,3 Block 12 correction Plat of Kincaid 1st addition to the
Town of Waterville. This has been the legal description associated with
this property since 1918. Tax parcel # 119012 00100

FOR OAHF USE ONLY

Site No. _____ Field No. _____

Property Category _____ Context/Theme _____ Style/Form _____ Materials _____

Significant Date(s) _____ Construction Date _____

Quadrangle/ Map Reference _____

Township _____ Range _____ Section _____ Q _____ QQ _____ QQQ _____

City Plat: Lot(s) _____ Block(s) _____ Acreage _____

UTM Reference: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____

WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

CLG attachment

IMPORTANT:

Check the list (reverse side) to see if your property is located within a Certified Local Government jurisdiction (CLG). A CLG is a federally approved preservation program and should be contacted when properties are nominated in its community or county.

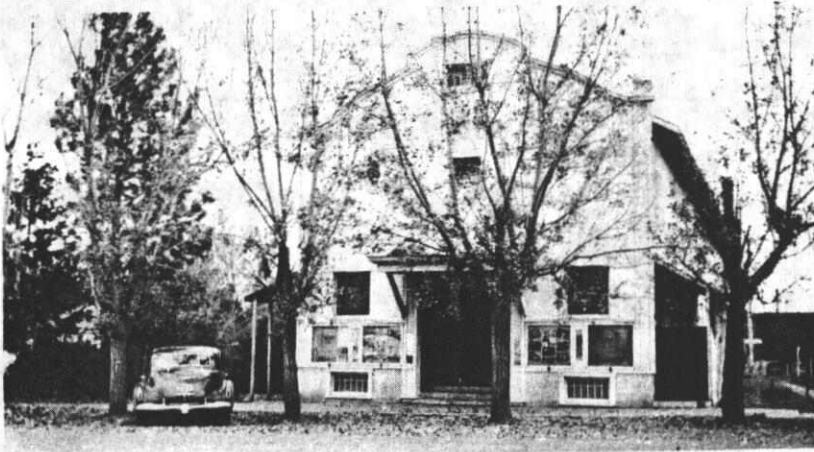
Before submittal to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, please forward a copy of your nomination to the appropriate CLG coordinator and have the coordinator sign this form. Return the completed application and signed form to: Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 111 21st Avenue SW, Olympia, Washington 98504-8343.

I certify that I have reviewed the Washington Heritage Register application for the following nomination:

The Nifty Theatre
Nomination

Les Young
CLG Coordinator

TREASURE EXCHANGE COMPANY
Listing #105



Family theatre in County seat with no competition. Excellent living quarters on premises. Present owner has had the show business in this town for 30 years.

The income from this situation has permitted the owner to enjoy his hobby of race horses and to acquire some 1200 acres of land in addition to his theatre property.

The owner is a college man (Washington State) and chose show business because his knee failed to stop a luger bullet and left him slightly incapacitated for strenuous work or long hours.

That his choice was a wise one is attested by his 30 years in the town and his worldly acquisitions.

BUILDING

On a corner, 1 block from main business intersection. Plain V roof frame structure. Substantially built with alternate 2" x 8" and 3" x 8" side studding. Dimensions 31.4' x 108' plus 9.6' shed type extension in back. Approximately 30' maximum height. Built in 1919. Painted white. Paint on north and west sides fair, on south and east sides needs repainting. Shed type extension on back used as garage and part was used as dressing room for stage players. There are 2 dressing room spaces, one down a flight of stairs and the other on the garage level. The composition roof is in good condition except the northwest corner. A piece approximately 4' x 4' was blown off in storm and has not been replaced. Stands alone on a 75' x 119' lot, 4' in from the street on the west side and joins the street line in front. The approximately 40' x 119' vacant property on the east is used as a yard. It has some shrubs and trees and a clothes line. The back is used to store wood for one of the furnaces. There are 4 ventilators on the peak of the roof. The front is stuccoed and appears to be in good condition. The name of the theatre is painted on the side towards the business district and also on the front. A small canopy overhangs the street but serves no advertising purpose. There are 4 steps up from the street to an enclosed ramp which is the outer lobby. The entrance is approximately 9'. The balance of the lower part of the front of the building is taken up with display space in 4 glass enclosed frames.

LOBBY

Outer- 4 steps up from street. Approximately 10' x 10' on an incline. Rubber composition flooring. Pipe frame stanchions and railing segregates incoming and outgoing traffic. The Box Office window is on the left side nearest the foyer.
Foyer- 9' x 25' approximately. Carpet is worn and should be replaced. A fibre matting is laid over the carpet in the line of traffic to the 2 auditorium entrances, also in front of the office door which leads off the auditorium on the left side. Auditorium entrances have blue and red corduroy drapes. Drinking fountain. No candy or popcorn. Davenport. Spring steel metal chair.

REST ROOMS

Men's- Off right side of foyer. Approximately 5' x 6'. Hot water radiator, Water closet, Wash bowl, Paper towel rack.

Ladies- Off right side of foyer toward front. Takes up corner of a room occupying right front corner of the building. Room 10' x 12' with hot water radiator, 2' x 3' mirror on wall, Table. Rest room approximately 5' x 6'. Water closet, Wash bowl, Paper towel rack, Hot water radiator. Stairs lead to 10' x 12' crying room where there are 5 seats. The front (toward screen) is open. There is no speaker. The owner says the sound from the picture comes in O.K. but any noise in the room does not seem to be audible in the auditorium.

OFFICE & BOX OFFICE.

10' x 12'. Heated by "Spark" oil heater connected to a small drum for oil supply. Individual chimney. Desk, Chair, (Steel file used for race horse records does not go.) Typewriter. 2 outside windows. Stairs to booth. Box office occupies corner of office, not partitioned off. Money drawer. Pipe chute to send money to apartment below.

BOOTH

10' x 12' cement plastered walls and ceiling on metal lath and cement floor.

Wash bowl.
Simplex projectors.
Simplex type S carbon lamp houses.
Wagner 50 Amp motor generator.
Extra reels - 2 large, 8 small.
Glass bulb fire extinguisher.
1 Spot light to illuminate stage.

R.C.A. Sound.
Hand rewind.
Film splicer.
Film cabinet.
Chair.
Record player (not in use)

AUDITORIUM

30' spread, 88' throw. Approximately 300 seats, 3 rows, 2 aisles. 80 all veneer seats. Balance leatherette covered spring bottoms, veneer backs, with some leatherette part way up the back. Seats in fair condition, some need repairing. Floor space 80' x 30'. 4 exits. Walls plastered and covered with celotex. Sides arched to meet ceiling. Arched part decorated with scenes which are illuminated. Ceiling is finished in metal and decorated. Ceiling 24' at stage, 5' less at back of auditorium due to floor slope. Wood floor. Carpets fair. Space for orchestra. Cooled by air conditioning unit on left side mounted outside the building, high up. This unit is supplemented by a 30" exhaust fan in the rear of the building on very hot days. Heated by wood furnace. Self circulating system. Owner says back of auditorium is warmer than front where heat enters auditorium.

STAGE

9' x 18' in front of screen. Approximately same space from screen to back of building. Foot lights. Sides and back drop with forest scene. R.C.A. screen 12' x 16', comparatively new. Rose colored velvet, hand operated curtain. Same kind of material used for drapes on both back stage entrances. Stage reached by steps both sides of orchestra pit. Stage plays used to be given and High School students used the stage until the owner felt this arrangement to be no longer practical from his standpoint. Dressing rooms for the stage have already been discussed.

BASEMENT

Unfinished part entered from apartment. There are 2 spaces, one front and one in the extreme rear, each of which is approximately 20' x 30'. They are joined by a tunnel. The front space has 2 furnaces, a brick one that is not used and a coal furnace that furnishes hot water heat to all of the building except the auditorium. The wood

BASEMENT (cont'd)

furnace in the rear, that heats the auditorium takes 4' wood. It is a 2 compartment bricked type self circulating. When the building was under construction in 1919, before the furnace was put in, a stove was temporarily installed in this section, to furnish heat for workers. In an unguarded moment it became overheated and caught fire to the sub floor. The blaze was extinguished, leaving the joists and sub floor-ing charred. Evidently no serious damage was done since it has been in its present condition for 27 years with no bad effects.

LIVING QUARTERS

Large living room, 2 bedrooms, dining room off living room, kitchen, utility room and bathroom. Comfortable, neat and clean. Under theatre about half above and half below the ground level. Plenty of windows and light but cooler in summer and warmer in winter than a house would be. Access from 2 sides, if desired. Only one in present use. Completely plastered, unfurnished.

PRODUCT & POLICY

3 night operation. 2 changes. Saturday - Sunday and Wednesday 2 shows per night--single bills. No matinees. About 6 percentage pictures per year. Film contracted for in Seattle.

ADMISSION & TAX

Adults-----	50¢-----	city tax 2¢---	Fed. tax 8¢-----	net 40¢
Students-----	40¢-----	" " 2¢---	" " 8¢-----	" 30¢
Pensioners-----	25¢-----	" " 2¢---	" " 8¢-----	" 15¢
Kids under 12---	12¢-----	" " 2¢---	" " 2¢-----	" 10¢

The foregoing are the posted prices and policy.

COMPETITION

Only theatre in the County. Nearest theatres are 27 miles one way and 42 miles in the other direction.

POPULATION

Approximately 1100 in town. Nearly 10,000 in the County. Mostly old settlers and their descendents. Many of German descent.

INDUSTRIES

Typical rural community in which wheat farming, beef cattle and turkey raising account for most of the income. On a main highway. Transients are accommodated by a good brick hotel and 2 tourist courts. Railroad is five miles distant. Served by truck lines.

CLIMATE & MISCELLANEOUS

Typical eastern Washington seasonable weather. Hot summer is tempered somewhat by the elevation which is approximately 2650 feet above sea level. There are dam projects, either completed or proposed, in all directions. This will eventually effect the climate somewhat, due to the increase in the general amount of moisture retained. Excellent fishing and hunting territory. Large Union High School. Good Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Four Square, and Federated (Methodist, Christian, Baptist and Presbyterian Churches). 3 automobile agencies. County seat. Weekly newspaper. Bank. Substantial business district. Community is prosperous. Active Commercial Club.

PRICE

\$20,000. cash for the real estate and business, equipment and supplies of the theatre which includes 3 - 24 sheet sign boards scattered on the main street. Anyone with good credit, should be able to obtain a substantial loan on the property.

TITLE

Abstract.

POSSESSION

Present owner requires 30 days notice to find a place to live.

THEATRE PROFITS

It is only natural that a prospective theatre purchaser should be interested in what the net profits are for the theatre he is seeking. However some interested parties expect us to furnish figures from the theatre records by simply writing us for them. No theatre owner will send this information out promiscuously and his business judgment would be questioned if he did so. When evidence of good faith is shown on the part of the prospective buyer at the time he inspects the theatre, the theatre records will be made available. Do not write this office for figures as to gross business and net profits as we do not nor can not supply them.

APPOINTMENT

This theatre is shown by appointment only. Nothing hurts a theatre more than for a prospective theatre purchaser to go into a town and start checking up on the theatre with the local people. Everyone soon knows the theatre is for sale, business is hurt and the theatre cheapened.

We will arrange to show you the theatre at your convenience without obligation to you if you are ready to buy now and are financially able to handle the deal if suited.

Representations herein contained are based solely upon information furnished us by the principal.

IMPORTANT

Your name will automatically be dropped from our mailing list unless you acknowledge, within ten days, the receipt of each listing.

THEATRE EXCHANGE COMPANY

217 Governor Building

Portland 4, Oregon

PHONES: Broadway 0531
Lancaster 6952

Wednesday

July 1, 1998

50 cents

93rd year, No. 311

HOME EDITION



Griffey, A-Rod voted All-Star starters

Sports/Page 13

THE WENATCHEE WA

Published in the apple capital of the world and the buckle of the power belt of the great Northwest



The exterior of Waterville's Nifty Theatre hasn't changed much since this photo was taken in 1945.

Family lovingly restores Waterville's Nifty Theatre

By DAN WHEAT
World staff writer

From the outside, the old Nifty Theatre building in Waterville still looks forlorn and badly in need of paint. The new sidewalk out front is the only clue that something's happening on the inside.

Jim Dixon and his family have already invested a year's worth of toil painstakingly restoring the theater.

Decorative tin plates covering the ceiling and original murals depicting the Northwest and the tropics have been brought back to life on the walls. Original wood floors, once hidden by linoleum, have been refinished.

An old backdrop curtain remains good enough to use. A red velvet border curtain from Chelan's Ruby Theater has been cleaned and hung. The original silver screen is stored in the basement, where it hasn't been unrolled in years.

Townpeople hope restoring The Nifty, the recent repainting of historic downtown buildings and restoration of the Waterville Historic Hotel a couple of years ago will combine to draw tourists and enliven the town's turn-of-the-century farming appeal.

They're excited about seeing The Nifty, of which they have childhood memories, open again. The theater has been closed for 40 years.

"That old building has just sat there and deteriorated. It's going to be so neat," said town Clerk Diana Vickery.

Dixon, an electrical inspector for the state Department of Labor and Industries, is refinishing the stage, installing 96



Nifty Theatre, a landmark on East Locust Street, as it looks today.

used theater seats (a few of the original seats can still be found in the Bozarth Room of the North Central Washington Museum in Wenatchee) and is building two dressing rooms. He excavated and rebuilt part of the foundation, replaced an old oil-fired heat exchanger with electric heat and replumbed the restrooms.

A ticket booth and office inside the front door still contain the old money drawer and desk. There's a room next to the projector room in the back where mothers once took crying babies.

Dixon had hoped to reopen it as a community theater for melodrama and vaudeville in time for Waterville Days, the annual community festival, on July 11. It won't be ready, but he may offer tours that day.

He hopes to have it ready to rent in October. Local organizations, the school and theater groups in Mans-

Raising the Curtain on history



World photo/Dan Seabrook

Jim Dixon prepares to hang a section of red velvet curtain as part of his renovation of the Nifty Theatre. Renovation also brought a rebirth for the Waterville Hotel, story on Page 10.

Please see NIFTY THEATRE, Page 10

Nifty Theatre: Curtain nearly ready to rise

From Page 1

field and Chelan are potential customers.

Dixon was advised it wouldn't be economically feasible to reopen the theater to show movies. But he isn't crazy about present-day movies anyway.

He is excited about staging melodramas.

"Everybody needs a laugh. I feel there's a need for good, clean, wholesome entertainment. There's a lot of talent up here, just no place to use it."

The Nifty was built about 1920 and operated until the late 1950s.

"So many people have told me stories about when they came here," Dixon said. "Waterville High School seniors put on plays here for

years. Some of those kids still live here. They wrote their names on the projector room walls."

Town Clerk Vickery, 51, remembers seeing "The Blob" there in 1957. Admission for children 12 and younger was 25 cents then.

W.P. Brown, who owned the theater for many years, used to walk down the aisle at intermission with dollar bills taped together, partly wrapped around him and trailing behind. He would draw an admission ticket out of a big fish bowl and gave the dollar bills to the winner.

"I never won anything, but I thought that was pretty nifty," Vickery laughed.

Dixon doesn't share those memories, but he loves the old building.

He was raised in Prosser and is a

relative newcomer to Waterville, having lived here for just seven years. He bought the old Chris Schmidt farmhouse, located four miles northeast of town, in 1990 and restored it. Built in 1915, it hadn't been lived in for 40 years. Now it's on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1994, Dixon began eyeing The Nifty. The foundation was crumbling, and it was water damaged from snow melt. It was owned by Claude Case, of Wenatchee, who used it for storage.

Dixon and some Waterville High School teachers formed a group to buy The Nifty, but they couldn't raise the \$23,500 they needed. The group disbanded and donated the \$5,000 they had raised to the Dou-

glas County Historical Society.

"Two years went by, and I talked to Case one day," Dixon recalled. "He was fixing the roof, and it was hot. He was tired, and he said, 'Do you want to buy this place?' I said, 'We'll do it right now.' Then I went home and told my wife that we owned a theater."

That was last June.

Dixon paid more than \$23,500 for the theater but won't say how much. He said he's invested more than \$20,000 in labor and materials, but has received helpful discounts from local stores.

He said the Port of Douglas County has helped look for grants, and he's asked Rep. Clyde Ballard, R-East Wenatchee, for help in seeking state grants.

Douglas County Empire Press

Since 1888

50 cents

Thursday, July 30, 1998

Control Taken on Irrigation Planning



Active supporter of the Douglas County farming community, is committed to includes water quantity, water quality, and wildlife habitat so that our family-farms Linda is pictured here with Danyelle and Cameron Cavadini (children of Dan & was an active participant in the recent Environmental Tour hosted by the environmentalists, agency folks, and local farmers to discuss endangered

Empire photo

the City of East Wenatchee East Wenatchee Irrigation (the largest cities and surveyors in the north and parts of Douglas County.) the South Douglas Conservation District and the Douglas County Commissioners.

According to Bridgeport and orchardist, Wade N, "Ecology has been trying for years to get a handle on allocation and withdrawals of the Upper Columbia River. We have a lot of water resource problems in our area. A lot of people from outside of C.W. use our water for power and recreation. To be very important to have people decide how this wa-

cess was stopped." After the 3rd re-write of the grant proposal Representative Linda Evans Parlette got involved in helping to ensure that the grant application process moved forward to the funding stage.

Linda was instrumental in bringing ESHB 2514 sponsor Representative Gary Chandler to Wenatchee to meet with all of the cities, county commissioners, and irrigation and conservation districts in Okanogan, Douglas, and Chelan Counties last May. From there Linda was committed to keeping abreast of the grant process. She met with Ecology Director Tom Fitzsimmons several times. "Her efforts tipped the scale for

Nifty Theatre is "Open for Business"

On Friday, July 24, the Nifty Theatre and owners Jim and Jenna Dixon, put on a fabulous show. Dixon brought in a play production group out of Wenatchee to work with the local kids on musical and skit performances. The Musical Kids Camp started on Monday and ended on Friday with approximately 15 to 20 kids participating from ages 5 to 15.

The production packed the theatre, with not only family members of the kids but community members too that haven't seen a production of any kind in the theatre for many of years. The kids opened and closed the show with a song and dance called "Open for Business" that suited the occasion just perfect. Dixon had a concession area selling the favorite movie goodies and the fee to get in was by donation only.

Dixon, who has been refurbishing the old Nifty, really put on a great show. The kids had a blast and the audience loved it. Dixon also stuck with the tradition of a raffle drawing at the beginning and end of the show, just like they did in the old days.

For those of us who are too young to know what the place looked like before it looks great. And for those of us who are old enough to remember watching movies and cartoons when it was

open before, it brings back good memories. Dixon has spent a lot of time and effort into restoring the theatre to make it look like it did many years ago. On the walls of the theatre Dixon has pictures of what the place looked like when he purchased it.

There was so much stuff stored in there it is a wonder that he ever made it to the bottom of the pile. He was not able to save the old seats but has seats in there that you wouldn't find in a theatre today. The pictures painted around the ceiling are the original ones that he was able to preserve and then to be able to make the floor look so nice after being shut up for so long, it is amazing.

He definitely had his work cut out for him when he started this job and I'm sure there were those people in town that thought nobody would ever be able to do it, but now everyone can sit back and look at the masterpiece that he has recreated and be grateful to him. Dixon has done an outstanding job.

In the years to come he hopes to have many productions put on in the Nifty to get the community and the kids involved. He has opened a new, but old chapter in Waterville history and he did it with a bang. Congratulations Jim and Jenna, the place looks great.

4-H News

By: Rachel Willms & Keelyn Craig

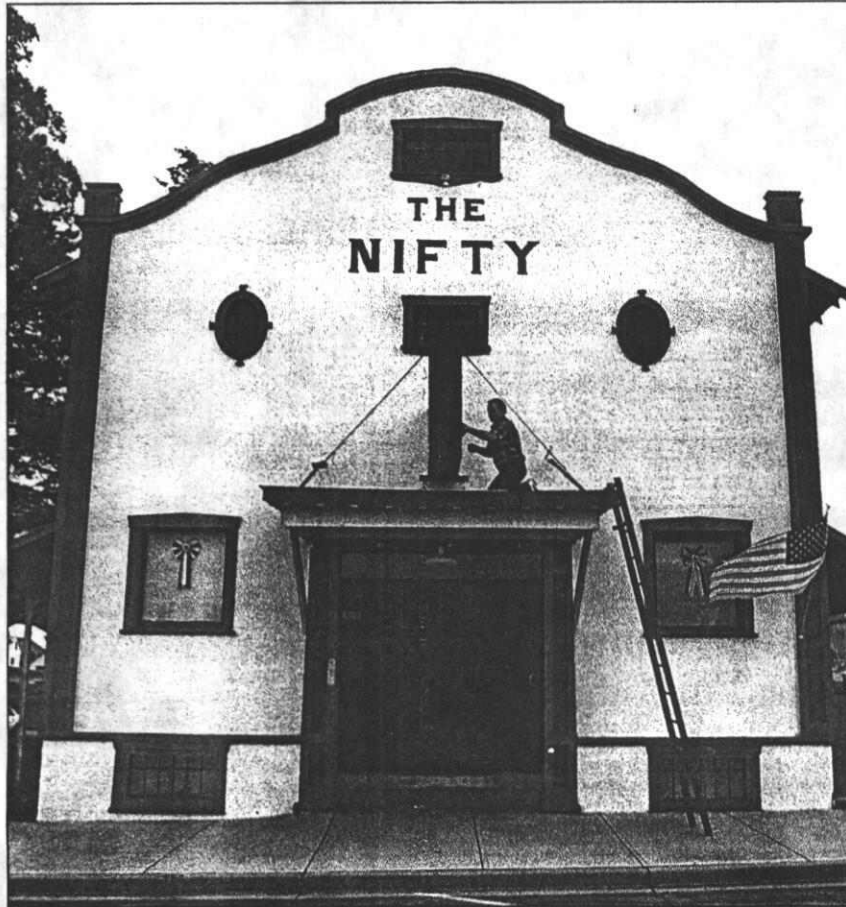
The Douglas Livestock 4-H Club met on Monday, July 20 for their regular meeting. Cameron Meilke led the Flag Salute and Keelyn Craig led the 4-H Pledge.

ville Demolition Derby and assisted Wishbone Catering with serving breakfast during Waterville Days. To continue our community service project at the

THE ARTS

Features editor
Dee Riggs
(509) 664-7147

Thursday, July 8, 1994



World photos / Tom Williams

Local theater troupe plans performances for Waterville Days

WATERVILLE — The Nifty Theatre Troupe will present two performances of "Black Deeds in White Horse (Or Trapped in the Yukon)" at 1:30 and 4 p.m. Saturday.

The back-to-back shows, scheduled to coincide with Waterville Days, will reprise the performances of the same show that played to near-sellout audiences May 14-15. Tickets are \$5 per person and are available at Waterville Town Hall, Mitchell's Pharmacy or at the door.

Cast members, all of them local, include Kim Northcott, Lo Craig, Joann Whitehall, Jim and Jenna Dixon, Rob Craig, Joyce Longanecker and Susan Mittelstaedt.

On Aug. 6-7, the Nifty will host "The Fisherman and His Wife," children's performance that will be co-directed by Lori Craig and Rachel Bruggman.

— Scott Sandsberry, World staff

Jim Dixon, owner of the Nifty Theatre Waterville, changes the marquee to announce an upcoming show.

A NIFTY labor of love

Jim Dixon spends his money, time restoring historic Waterville theater

BY SCOTT SANDSBERRY
World staff writer

WATERVILLE — When Jim Dixon got the word last March that the Nifty Theatre had officially become part of the Washington Heritage Register, he wasn't surprised.

When he bought it in 1997, in fact, the Nifty was full of history. Literally.

The previous owner had used the theater for storage, and the interior was stacked full of stuff, most of it decades old, very little of it usable in the theater. There was even an old Honda Civic on the main floor.

But some parts of that ancient interior

to," said Dixon, who keeps it in the basement. "I was afraid the silver screen might fall apart, but people tell me that was some of the best screen ever made. Maybe I will unroll it one of these days."

Dixon, an electrical inspector by day, has been busy evenings and weekends in the theater with what he calls his "labor of love" — refurbishing the classic-but-musty, replacing the missing, repainting the discolored and, all in all, giving his wife, Jenna, cause to question his sanity. Asked by a reporter in the beginning why he'd purchased the theater, she had responded, "Because he's an idiot."

"I think," Dixon said, grinning about that



World file photo /

In 1994, the Nifty was packed with rubbish, including an old Honda Civic.

Dixon has redone the stage and the stage lighting; added manually operated draw curtains; built two small walkway arches for actors to enter the stage; painted the interior and exterior; added male and female dressing rooms, both heated and air-conditioned; installed a sound system of hidden stage microphones to amplify sound from anywhere on the stage; and added "what they call a follow-spot," Dixon said, a spotlight to highlight actors.

The 160 seats include 60 dinosaurs from the original Nifty — wooden, unpadded — brought over from the North Central Washington Museum. For those who prefer comfort over history, the 100 seats closest



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Fitch (Little, Brown)
5. "Mother of Pearl" by
Melinda Haynes (Hyperion)

Nonfiction
1. "Shadow" by Bob Woodward (Simon & Schuster)
2. "The Greatest Generation" by Tom Brokaw (Random House)
3. "Tuesdays With Morrie" by Mitch Albom (Doubleday)
4. "Sugar Busters!" by H.L. Steward, M. Bethea, et al. (Ballantine)
5. "Body for Life" by Bill Phillips and Michael D'Orso (HarperCollins)

— The Wall Street Journal

♦ The writers' writers

NEW YORK — Have you ever wondered which writers your favorite author admires? Wonder no more, if your favorite author is among the 115 who contributed to a new book, "For the Love of Books" by Ronald B. Schwartz. Schwartz compiled the book by asking writers, "Which books have left the greatest impression on you, and why?" The essays are previously unpublished, and each is preceded by a brief biography of the contributor. The hardcover book is published by Grosset-Putnam at \$24.95.

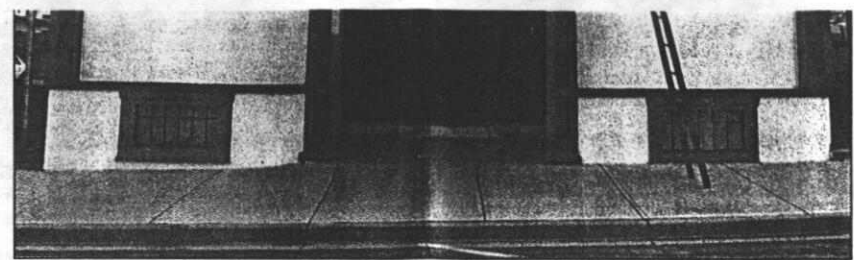
— The Associated Press

Best bets on TV

From TV critic Greg Paeth:
Tonight: "Evening at Pops," 7 p.m., PBS. Performances from Ann Hampton Callaway, the Jivin' Lindy Hoppers and Five O'Clock Shadow.
"Biography," 9 p.m., A&E. How Pat Nixon came to define the ideal political wife.
"Vanished," 10 p.m., ABC. After three weeks of exploring contemporary disappearances, this ABC News series examines one of the most famous kidnappings in American history — the disappearance of the Lindbergh baby.
"48 Hours," 10 p.m., CBS. "Multiples" is a report on the formidable challenges of reproductive technology and its effect on the population.

Section C

Tomorrow in Family, Faith:
A tour of the Lake Chelan retreat, Holden Village.



World photos / Tom Williams

...be co-directed by Lori Craig and Rachel Bruggman.
— Scott Sandsberry, World staff

Jim Dixon, owner of the Nifty Theatre in Waterville, changes the marquee to announce an upcoming show.

A NIFTY labor of love

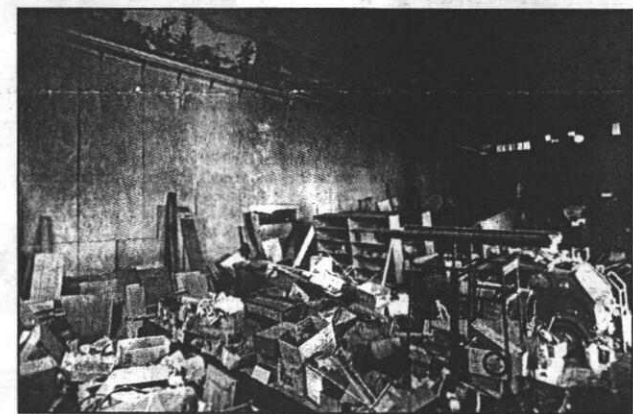
Jim Dixon spends his money, time restoring historic Waterville theater

BY SCOTT SANDSBERRY
World staff writer

WATERVILLE — When Jim Dixon got the word last March that the Nifty Theatre had officially become part of the Washington Heritage Register, he wasn't surprised. When he bought it in 1997, in fact, the Nifty was full of history. Literally. The previous owner had used the theater for storage, and the interior was stacked full of stuff, most of it decades old, very little of it usable in the theater. There was even an old Honda Civic on the main floor. But some parts of that ancient interior were chapters in the theater's 80-year history. Like the original wooden screen frame, purchased in 1928 — still there on the stage, but camouflaged within a larger frame built years later to accommodate wide-screen films. Like the old silver screen, a relic from silent-film days.

"I've never unrolled it, because I'm afraid

to," said Dixon, who keeps it in the basement. "I was afraid the silver screen might fall apart, but people tell me that was some of the best screen ever made. Maybe I will unroll it one of these days." Dixon, an electrical inspector by day, has been busy evenings and weekends in the theater with what he calls his "labor of love" — refurbishing the classic-but-musty, replacing the missing, repainting the discolored and, all in all, giving his wife, Jenna, cause to question his sanity. Asked by a reporter in the beginning why he'd purchased the theater, she had responded, "Because he's an idiot." "I think," Dixon said, grinning about that 2-year-old memory, "she's had a change of heart. The Nifty itself has had a change of ... well, almost everything. Audience members at Saturday's back-to-back performances of "Black Deeds in White Horse" won't recognize it as the musty, dusty mausoleum of two years ago.



World file photo / Tom Williams

In 1994, the Nifty was packed with rubbish, including an old Honda Civic.

Dixon has redone the stage and the stage lighting; added manually operated draw curtains; built two small walkway arches for actors to enter the stage; painted the interior and exterior; added male and female dressing rooms, both heated and air-conditioned; installed a sound system of hidden stage microphones to amplify sound from anywhere on the stage; and added "what they call a follow-spot," Dixon said, a spotlight to highlight actors. The 160 seats include 60 dinosaurs from the original Nifty — wooden, unpadded — brought over from the North Central Washington Museum. For those who prefer comfort over history, the 100 seats closest to the stage are, Dixon says, "as wide as ya got" seats purchased from a theater in Edmonds. In all, Dixon figures he spent about \$40,000 in upgrading the building, and doesn't expect ever to recoup it.



The inside of a refined powder room at the Nifty Theatre.

Please see NIFTY, Page C2

Lake Chelan Bach Feste will also feature Spanish composers

BY JAIMIE WILSON
World staff writer

Chelan Bach

The next year, Hartley asked

States to perform in this. This year,

said Jensen, the festival will turn

Wednesday
July 1, 1998
50 cents
93rd year, No. 311
HOME EDITION



Griffey, A-Rod voted
All-Star starters
Sports/Page 13

Partly cloudy
Breezy on Thursday.
Highs lower 90s.
Lows upper 50s.
Weather/Page 3



THE WENATCHEE WORLD

Published in the apple capital of the world and the buckle of the power belt of the great Northwest



The exterior of Waterville's Nifty Theatre hasn't changed much since this photo was taken in 1945.

Family lovingly restores Waterville's Nifty Theatre

By DAN WHEAT
World staff writer

From the outside, the old Nifty Theatre building in Waterville still looks forlorn and badly in need of paint. The new sidewalk out front is the only clue that something's happening on the inside. Jim Dixon and his family have already invested a year's worth of toil painstakingly restoring the theater.

Decorative tin plates covering the ceiling and original murals depicting the Northwest and the tropics have been brought back to life on the walls. Original wood floors, once hidden by linoleum, have been refinished.

An old backdrop curtain remains good enough to use. A red velvet border curtain from Chelan's Ruby Theater has been cleaned and hung. The original silver screen is stored in the basement, where it hasn't been unrolled in years.

Townpeople hope restoring The Nifty, the recent repainting of historic downtown buildings and restoration of the Waterville Historic Hotel a couple of years ago will combine to draw tourists and enliven the town's turn-of-the-century farming appeal.



Nifty Theatre, a landmark on East Locust Street, as it looks today.

used theater seats (a few of the original seats can still be found in the Bozarth Room of the North Central Washington Museum in Wenatchee) and is building two dressing rooms. He excavated and rebuilt part of the foundation, replaced an old oil-fired heat exchanger with electric heat and replumbed the restrooms.

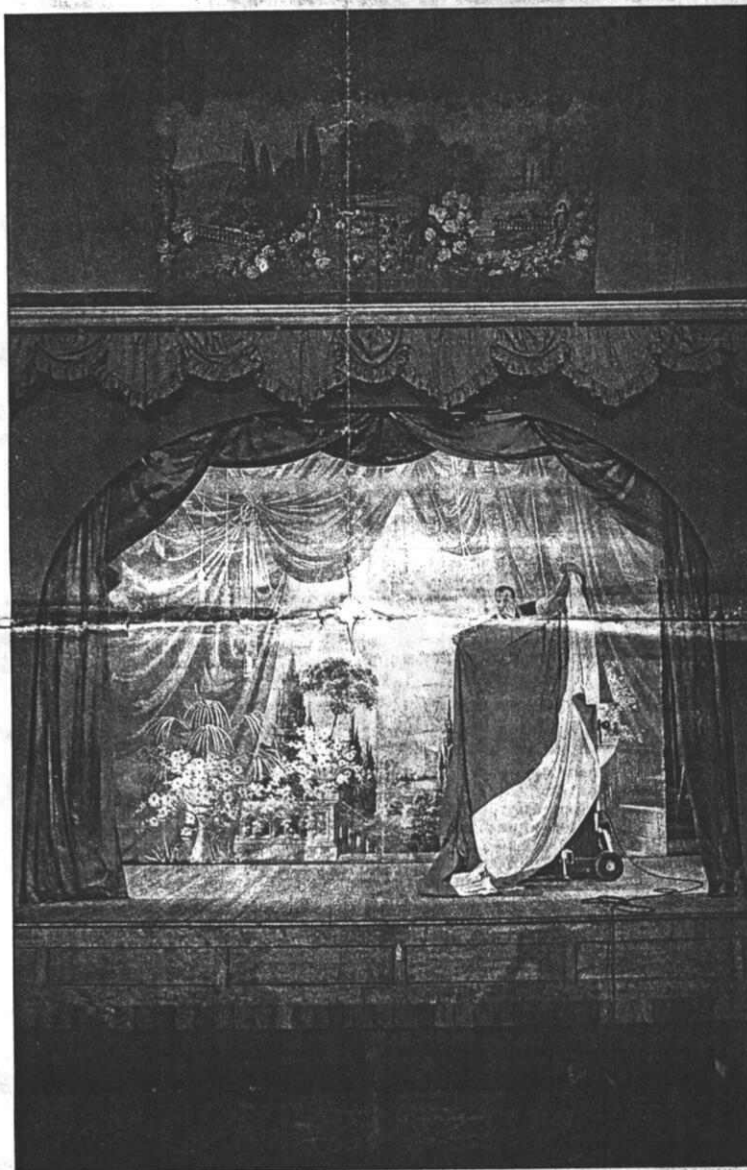
A ticket booth and office inside the front door still contain the old money drawer and desk. There's a room next to the projector room in the back where mothers once took crying babies.

Dixon had hoped to reopen it as a community theater for melodrama and vaudeville in time for Waterville Days, the annual community festival, on July 11. It won't be ready, but he may offer tours that day.

He hopes to have it ready to rent in October. Local organizations, the school and theater groups in Mans-

Please see NIFTY THEATRE, Page 10

Raising the Curtain on history



Jim Dixon prepares to hang a section of red velvet curtain as part of his renovation of the Nifty Theatre. Renovation also brought a rebirth for the Waterville Hotel, story on Page 10.

World photos/Don Seabrook

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By AVIVA L. B
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By RICK ST
World staff

"They (guests) spend the night, and the next morning they say they'll never stay in a regular motel again."

—Dave Lundgren, owner

Since U.S. Highway 2 through Waterville is one of the slower coast-to-coast routes, Lundgren gets a fair number of customers on epic journeys of personal challenge.

Last fall, there was Don Brown, the Walking Man from Boston, who had his own Web site and was trying to walk 15,000 miles to set a Guinness Book record.

"He was 52 years-old, had diabetes and two plastic knees," Lundgren said. "I gave him a room for free. I don't normally do that, but I was impressed."

Then there was Rudy Chaparro who was on a four- to five-year prayer walk around the perimeter of the country. There's been a hitchhiker from Massachusetts and lots of cross-country bicyclists.

"I get lots of interesting people. It's great. The



Door leads to the lobby of the turn-of-the-century hotel.

world comes to you," Lundgren said. "If you're working 100 hours a week and can't get away, you get to travel vicariously, which is kind of fun."

He's had guests from Russia, India and Saipan. Business has grown. About one-third of it is people who happen on the hotel by chance. Another third are people who come, and usually return, just because they like old hotels. Another third are people in town for funerals, weddings, reunions or business.

Lundgren, 40, was a grocery store clerk and real estate investor in Chico, Calif., when he discovered the hotel in 1989. It took him three years to buy it from Meta Gritsch, partly because she was looking for the right buyer who would restore it. She operated it with her husband from 1947 through 1975 and lived in it until 1993.

Lundgren is restoring more rooms, a library, a second-floor sitting room and a basement conference room.

He says there are other restoration projects in town just waiting. A Seattle couple bought Waterville's old Chevrolet Garage last fall and reportedly have restoration in mind.

cream, as a gathering point for farmers and once was a post office. It's been vacant since spring.

Raymond and Judy Wells ran it as a convenience store for about two years and then gave it to Mid State Bank of Waterville to avoid mortgage foreclosure, according to Dean Longanecker, bank president.

The property includes antique post office boxes, a house attached to the back of the store, four apartment units and a small RV park. The old fire engine that has sat out front isn't owned by the bank and is not part of the package.

"We've had several interested parties," Longanecker said. "We haven't had any firm offers yet."

The bank has advertised the store in Seattle and California newspapers. Longanecker said prospective buyers are considering running it as a convenience store or antique shop.

"The people who operated it last didn't have it open on Saturdays, which in my opinion, was a big detriment to the business," he said. "We've had good enough response that I'm confident we won't have a great deal of difficulty getting it sold."

Nifty Theatre: Curtain nearly ready to rise

From Page 1

field and Chelan are potential customers.

Dixon was advised it wouldn't be economically feasible to reopen the theater to show movies. But he isn't crazy about present-day movies anyway.

He is excited about staging melodramas.

"Everybody needs a laugh. I feel there's a need for good, clean, wholesome entertainment. There's a lot of talent up here, just no place to use it."

The Nifty was built about 1920 and operated until the late 1950s.

"So many people have told me stories about when they came here," Dixon said. "Waterville High School seniors put on plays here for

years. Some of those kids still live here. They wrote their names on the projector room walls."

Town Clerk Vickery, 51, remembers seeing "The Blob" there in 1957. Admission for children 12 and younger was 25 cents then.

W.P. Brown, who owned the theater for many years, used to walk down the aisle at intermission with dollar bills taped together, partly wrapped around him and trailing behind. He would draw an admission ticket out of a big fish bowl and gave the dollar bills to the winner.

"I never won anything, but I thought that was pretty nifty," Vickery laughed.

Dixon doesn't share those memories, but he loves the old building.

He was raised in Prosser and is a

relative newcomer to Waterville, having lived here for just seven years. He bought the old Chris Schmidt farmhouse, located four miles northeast of town, in 1990 and restored it. Built in 1915, it hadn't been lived in for 40 years. Now it's on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1994, Dixon began eyeing The Nifty. The foundation was crumbling, and it was water damaged from snow melt. It was owned by Claude Case, of Wenatchee, who used it for storage.

Dixon and some Waterville High School teachers formed a group to buy The Nifty, but they couldn't raise the \$23,500 they needed. The group disbanded and donated the \$5,000 they had raised to the Dou-

glas County Historical Society.

"Two years went by, and I talked to Case one day," Dixon recalled. "He was fixing the roof, and it was hot. He was tired, and he said, 'Do you want to buy this place?' I said, 'We'll do it right now.' Then I went home and told my wife that we owned a theater."

That was last June.

Dixon paid more than \$23,500 for the theater but won't say how much. He said he's invested more than \$20,000 in labor and materials, but has received helpful discounts from local stores.

He said the Port of Douglas County has helped look for grants, and he's asked Rep. Clyde Ballard, R-East Wenatchee, for help in seeking state grants.

Storms: Grim stories from flood, lightning survivors

From Page 1

of rain and flooding. Officials declared disasters in 24 counties.

Survivors told stories of wrenching loss and of hope as they tried to put their lives back together.

One man got a call from his wife on her cell phone moments before floodwaters swept her to her death. Another watched an old friend slowly lose her grip on a tree and fall into a raging torrent, where she drowned. And one couple was calling their baby a miracle.

for emergencies. This time, she called home.

"She said she called because she was going to die, and she loved me. And then the phone went dead," Carson Hollida said.

Carol McWilliams, 55, had reconnected with a high school friend after 40 years of silence, only to lose

her on Sunday to a flash flood in Tupper Plains, Ohio. McWilliams grabbed onto a sycamore branch, but Doris Ellis couldn't hang on.

"Every time I shut my eyes, I relive the whole thing over again, so I try not to shut my eyes," McWilliams told The Columbus Dispatch.



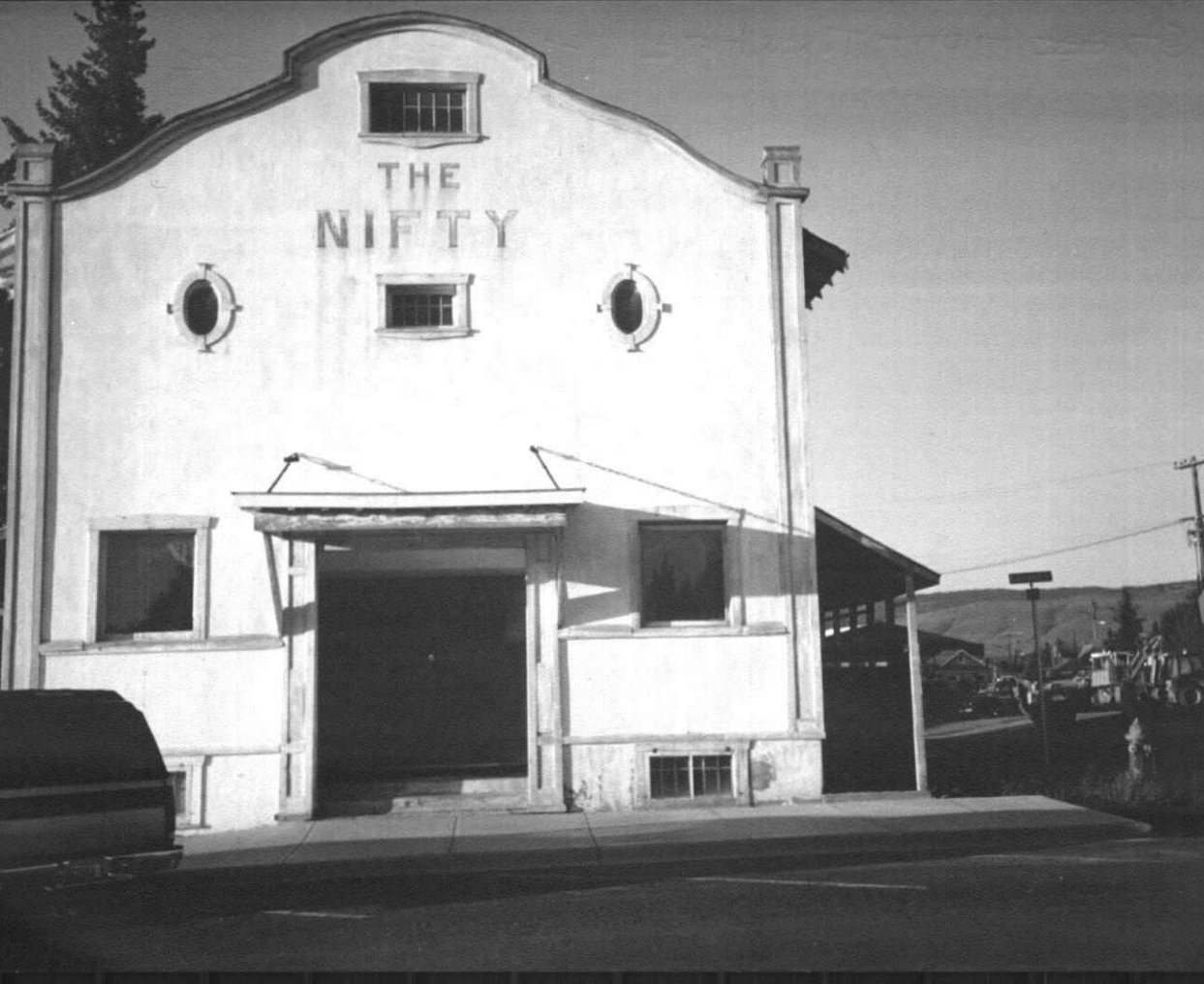


East view Theatre

Nifty Theatre

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THE
NIFTY



Street front Theatre
faces Louist Street

North end

Nifty Theatre

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West view Theatre

Nifty Theatre

<No. 15R>005 36-03 NNNNN+31RU 011



Building back

South end

<No. 139>007 36-02 NNNNN+28RU 011







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NIGHT

NIFTY THEATRE

CHANCE OF PROGRAM

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REELS

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